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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Birkholz Announces White Pine Winners

*Recipients of the White Pine Award for
Environmental Excellence honored and give testimony before Senate committee*

Tuesday, April 22, 2003- Senator Patricia Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township, chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee, today presented the White Pine Award for Environmental Excellence to the Michigan 4H Youth Development Program and the 4H Youth Conservation Council this morning, April 22 (Earth Day). The honorees include:

South West Region:

Tony Hiatt, Berrien County
April White, Calhoun County
Courtney Rockenback, Van Buren
Heather Vanerlaan, Advisor

UP Region:

Emily Fettig, Baraga County
Eric Sprott, Ontonagon County
Sean Trudgeon, Ontonagon County
Mike Jensen, Advisor
Jean Fittig, Advisor

North Region:

Randy Minish, Antrim County
Kacy Hermans, Midland County
Aranthea Bensel, Missaukee County
Richard Bensel, Advisor
Bruce Patterson Advisor

West Central Region

John Michael Ayers, Montcalm County
Heather Woodward, Newaygo County
Trish Alber, Kent County
Brian Gradner, Advisor
Pat Dignum, Advisor

South East Region II

Olivia Cohn, Washtenaw County
Lisa Compton, Macomb County
Forrest Cohn, Washtenaw County
Kevin Baxter, Wayne County

Courtney Butts, Wayne County
Cheri Derksen, Oakland County
Heather VanDenBurg, Advisor

South East Region I

Pamela Nichol, Sanilac County
Valarie Stevens, Sanilac County
Aaron Salder, Lapeer County
Don Matlock, Genesee County

Jennifer Brorson, Lapeer County
Darren Bagley, Advisor

Senator Birkholz, who has restored the use of the White Pine Award for Environmental Excellence said, “It is a pleasure to work with such dedicated young people who show so much enthusiasm in conserving our precious resources.”

The tribute and the Award recognized the Michigan 4-H Youth Development Program and the 4-H Youth Conservation Council for their efforts to promote environment education environmental stewardship in and around the state of Michigan. The group also testified before the Senate Natural Resources and Environment Affairs Committee meeting this afternoon.

The Michigan Youth Development program provides educational opportunities that target age appropriate life skill development, emphasizes research-based experiential learning, involves volunteers and families and promotes a multi-cultural perspective. The mission of the program is to create non-formal, fun, educational opportunities to help youth thrive in a complex and changing world.

The Michigan 4-H Youth Conservation Council is a group of 25 selected youth between the ages of 13-19, representing all six of the Michigan State University Extension regions. This state-wide teen leadership council selects a conservation issue, researches the topic, develops an oral and written presentation, and then makes a recommendations to one of the standing committees of the State Senate or House of Representatives that handle issues pertaining to natural resources and the environment. This year the council researched the topic of small petroleum spills in the inland lakes, rivers and the Great Lakes which is a constant problem affecting our natural resources

The White Pine Award for Environmental Excellence began over 10 years ago to recognize an individual or a group of individuals who have made a consistent, enduring commitment in their words and actions in helping protect Michigan’s environment. Senator Birkholz has elected to restore this recognition program begun by then Senate Majority Leader Dick Posthumus as a way of honoring the actions of citizens all over Michigan who have stood tall to promote a wise conservation ethic in the state.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: A photo of Senator Birkholz and the award winners can be found at www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire.